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Wyoming Bighorns

Photo courtesy of Rick and Susie Graetz

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Mountain West News is a  
program of the  
O'Connor Center for the Rocky Mountain West at  
The University of Montana

**Thursday,  
May 8, 2014**

Produced by Shellie Nelson, MW News Editor

#### Editor's notes:

In the **Rockies today**, new regulations are issued by the United States on transporting oil by train, new data says methane releases from Colorado oilfields triple what previously estimated, and elk, mountain caribou and a Montana land exchange are also in the news.

First up, the U.S. Transportation Department issued an emergency order that requires railroads to notify state emergency officials about the movement of any trains carrying 100 million gallons of crude oil, roughly 35 tank cars, from the Bakken oil fields in North Dakota, Montana and Canada.

The agency also urged that older tank cars, known as DOT-111s, not be used to transport that crude.

A report issued Wednesday said that data captured by airplanes in 2012 over oil and gas operations in Colorado north of Denver found those operations were releasing 19.3 tons of methane an hour--about three times more than estimated--and that emissions of benzene and smog-forming volatile organic compounds were found to be seven times higher than estimated.

Two groups in Montana have sued to stop the implementation of new regulations designed to keep elk away from domestic cattle in the Paradise Valley to stop the spread of brucellosis from elk to domestic cattle.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has downgraded the status of the small herd of mountain caribou found in the Idaho Panhandle and northeastern Washington state from endangered to threatened.

And finally, a land exchange proposed in central Montana between the Bureau of Land Management and two Texas businessmen has been sent back to the drawing board after hunters protested, and that decision scuttled the Wilks brothers' previously announced intention to voluntarily open a section of Bullwhacker Road closed to public access by a 2011 court decision.

Small agricultural producers in western Montana who are in search of funding

[Mountain West Voices](#)

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[A Look Ahead](#)

#### A Look Ahead

**June 5-6:** The University of Colorado's Getches-Wilkinson Center for Natural Resources, Energy and the Environment's "[Water and Air Quality Issues in Oil and Gas Development: The Evolving Framework of Regulation and Management](#)", Boulder, Colo.

**June 9-11:** [Western Governors' Association Annual Meeting](#), Colorado Springs, Colo.

#### On the Bookshelf

Barbara Theroux of Fact & Fiction reviews [Goliath Staggered: How the people of Highway 12 conquered Big Oil](#)

#### Mountain West Perspectives

New [report highlights opportunities in the Colorado River Basin](#)

#### Mountain West Voices

Hear the stories of the Mountain West:

**5/2/2014:** [The Preservationist](#)

**4/18/2014:** [On the Tongue](#)

**3/26/2014:** [The Helmvile Waltz](#)

**3/12/2014:** [Monrovia To Montana](#)

**2/19/2014:** [Nobody Can](#)

may want to check out tonight's [Farm Fresh Pitchfest](#) at Le Petit Outre bakery, 129 S. Fourth St. W., in Missoula from 6 to 9 p.m.

### Quote of the day:

"As is with most pre-1907 water rights, there is no record of it in the state engineer's office. The Forest Service damn well knows that. They are ignoring that legal fact. The Forest Service has no right to use the water."

Otero County attorney **Blair Dunn**, discussing a [dispute between ranchers in the New Mexico county and the U.S. Forest Service over the right to water from a creek called Agua Chiquita](#).  
- Albuquerque Journal

## Rockies today

### [U.S. issues emergency order on oil trains, older tank cars](#)

On Wednesday, the U.S. Transportation Department ordered that railroads must now inform state safety officials about the movement of trains carrying more than 100 million gallons of crude oil from the Bakken in North Dakota, Montana and Canada, which is roughly 35 tanker cars, and the agency urged the quick retirement of older tanker cars that are at risk of rupturing during derailments.

Flathead Beacon (AP); May 8

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### [BLM wrangler threatened on Juab County highway in Utah](#)

Bureau of Land Management employees are removing identifying decals from their vehicles after an incident in Utah where a BLM wrangler was threatened by two unidentified men that pulled up alongside the BLM vehicle, flashed a sign that said "You need to die," and one of the men flashed a handgun.

Salt Lake Tribune; May 8

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### [Data captured in Colorado say emissions from drilling higher than estimated](#)

A study done at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Cooperative Institute for Research in Environmental Science used data captured by airplanes flying over oil and gas drilling operations north of Denver in Colorado in 2012 found that three times more methane was released by those operations than originally estimated.

Denver Post; May 8

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### [Maps track businesses in B.C., Alberta using temporary foreign workers](#)

The website [NTFW.ca](#) tracks businesses in Alberta and British Columbia that successfully applied to hire temporary foreign workers through 2012, with food service companies in three urban areas of those provinces hiring the majority of such workers, discounting claims that the federal program is needed to supplement the workforce in remote and rural areas for resource-based employment.

Calgary Herald (Canadian Press); May 8

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### [USFWS changes status of mountain caribou in Idaho, Washington](#)

In response to public comments on the listing of a small herd of mountain woodland caribou in the Idaho Panhandle and northeastern Washington state, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service downgraded the species' status from endangered to threatened, a decision claimed as a victory by both environmental groups and Bonner County and the Idaho State Snowmobile Association.

Spokane Spokesman-Review (AP); May 8

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### [Run-of-river-hydropower projects in NW B.C. near production](#)

There are \$1-billion worth of run-of-river hydropower production projects nearly ready to go online in northwest British Columbia that will produce enough power for a large industrial complex or 100,000 homes.

Vancouver Sun; May 8

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### [Montana groups sue FWP to stop elk hunt, fencing plan](#)

Two Montana Sportsmen's groups have filed a lawsuit against the state Fish, Wildlife and Parks and its commission to halt a late-spring elk hunt and a fencing plan designed to limit the movement of elk to stop the spread of brucellosis.

Billings Gazette; May 8

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## Major Funders:



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### [BLM halts planned Montana land exchange with Texas brothers](#)

After considerable opposition was voiced to a proposed land exchange in central Montana between the federal Bureau of Land Management and Texas businessmen and brothers Dan and Farris Wilks, BLM officials announced the exchange as originally proposed was off, and the Wilks brothers, who had previously announced they would reopen public access to a portion of Bullwhacker Road closed by a 2011 court order, said that they would not reopen access on that road.

Great Falls Tribune; May 8

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## Water

### [N.M. ranchers in fight with USFS over water rights](#)

As drought continues to throttle New Mexico, competition for remaining water resources is increasing, and now Otero County ranchers are fighting the U.S. Forest Service over its decision to fence off a 23-acre area through which Agua Chiquita creek flows, because the ranchers said their water rights predate the 1907 creation of the New Mexico Water Code.

Albuquerque Journal; May 8

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### [Alberta Environment raises alarm on invasive aquatic species](#)

The invasion of quagga and zebra mussels is of high concern to Alberta Environment, as the aquatic species could cost the province in the neighborhood of \$75 million should they be introduced into the province's waterways, and agency officials rolled out a five-pronged program to halt the invaders at the border, including setting up inspection stations on four major highways from the eastern provinces and the U.S. *A graphic tracking invasive aquatic species in U.S. and Canada accompanies this article.*

Calgary Herald; May 2

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### [Utah's water supply shows a north, south divide](#)

The Natural Resources Conservation Service released the Utah Water Supply Outlook Report for April on Wednesday, and for residents in the southern portion of the state the news was not good, with flows in the Virgin River in southwestern Utah at 29 percent of normal while conditions in Northern Utah were relatively good.

Salt Lake Tribune; May 8

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### [Whitewater seekers likely to be disappointed in S. Idaho](#)

Idaho Power is required to provide recreational flows from Milner Dam near Burley four times each year between April 30 and June 1, including Memorial Day, but this year with irrigators' demand so high, a spokesperson for the utility said it's unlikely there will be enough water to send over the dam for whitewater.

Twin Falls Times-News; May 8

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## Opinion

### [Drilling companies should follow Baker Hughes on hydraulic fracturing](#)

The decision announced late last month by Baker Hughes that it would publicly disclose all chemicals used in the drilling method known as hydraulic fracturing is one that should be followed by all drilling companies in the United States.

Casper Star-Tribune; May 8

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### [Montana Indian Health Services needs life-saving care](#)

Indian Health Services funding will run out of money by June 30th, three months before the end of the fiscal year, adding yet another layer of problems for health care in Indian Country, and in particular, in Billings, where 70,000 Native Americans in Montana and Wyoming depend on IHS facilities for their care, a situation Montana U.S. Sen. Jon Tester, the chairman of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee, plans to address in a field hearing on May 27.

Billings Gazette; May 8

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## Beyond the region

### [Oil boom, influx of workers tax small towns in SE New Mexico](#)

The problems experienced in Carlsbad and other small communities dealing with an influx of workers following the oil boom in the Permian Basin in southeastern New Mexico are similar to the small towns in eastern Montana and western North Dakota where the oil boom has filled up housing and hotels, left local companies wanting for workers and law enforcement officials dealing with higher crime rates.

Santa Fe New Mexican (AP); May 8

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### [Partisan procedural bickering halts Keystone XL vote in U.S. Senate](#)

U.S. Sen. Majority Leader Harry Reid blocked a move by to add an amendment to an energy efficiency bill that would speed approval of the Keystone XL pipeline after Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell declined to take Reid up on his offer for an up-or-down vote on the energy bill with a promise to hold a separate vote on the Keystone XL amendment.

Flathead Beacon (AP); May 8

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[Montana congressman wants VA chief to resign, senators disagree](#)

**Environment:**

[Montana FWP program builds trout fisheries 2 reservoirs, lakes](#)

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[U.S. Rep. Simpson's bill would raise weight limit on Idaho's highways](#)

**Community:**

[Record number to graduate today from Utah community college](#)

**Economy:**

[Bank, energy company team up on Colorado solar installations](#)

**Economy:**

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